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ABSTRACT

Designed to serve as a resource book to aid decision making by Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) staff and advisory panels, this report consists of a review and analysis of the current state of children's television programming. Major sections of the report are devoted to describing and analyzing children's television programming in the public broadcast community, while the remaining portions look at the context in which children and their television series interface. Three general topics are presented to describe this context: the child audience, the ecology of children's television viewing, and definitions of program content. Categories of conclusions used to summarize report findings include information needs, the status of children's television series, and issues. Alternatives and options for CPB action are outlined. (JEG)

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Children's Television Programming and Public Broadcasting: An Analysis and Assessment of Needs

Executive Summary

by
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Submitted to:

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Corporation for Public Broadcasting

Submitted by:

Public Sector Research Group

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of its proposed effort to stimulate the production and acquisition of programming for children, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) has initiated a multi-step planning procedure. This document summarizes a report to CPB developed as part of the planning effort. The report itself consists of a review and analysis of the current state of children's public television programming and it was designed to serve as a resource book to aid decision-making by CPB staff and advisory panels convened by CPB. While the work was sponsored by CPB, the assessments in both the summary and report represent the views of the authors.

The nature and scope of the task was defined primarily by CPB's commission that we review recent (generally 1975 and later) studies and documents related to children's programming on public television. Scheduling (about eight weeks) and the nature of the available documents (usually unpublished, often in the form of memos, drafts, or internal reports) also affected the effort markedly. The term children has been used to encompass age 2 through 17 and both instructional and general types of programming have been examined.

This Executive Summary really highlights the report rather than summarizes it. Conclusions are presented, but support for the conclusions in the form of charts, data tables, and references must be found in the original report. Readers of the Executive Summary may want to use it as a guide to the report where they can follow up the analysis behind specific conclusions.

The organization of the Executive Summary parallels the report. Children and the context of their television viewing are described initially, a second broad set of issues involves the public programming available for children including distribution and funding. Research on needs assessment, utilization of instructional television, evaluation, and audiences for general children's programs are examined in subsequent sections. A final topic is the nature and views of the constituencies for children's programming. Completing both this document and the report is a set of options for CPB action.

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Children and Television: Context Analysis

The main focus of this report is on public television programming for children. Major sections of the report are devoted to describing and analyzing children's television series and the status of children's television programming in the public broadcast community. Yet, to fully comprehend the complexity of children's television programming, it is critically important to look at the context in which children and their television series' interface. Three general topics are presented to describe this context; the child audience, the ecology of children's television viewing, and definitions of television series' content (program labels).

Child Audience

Television is recognized as part of modern living. Few children in this country are isolated from frequent contact with television programming. As a group, children are considered to be an especially vulnerable television audience. Changes in values, disintegration of behavior codes, and declines on measures of achievement have been linked to children's television viewing and program content. While the validity of such sweeping statements is questionable, there appear to be a sufficient body of evidence to support the notion that television is an important contributor to children's growth.

Age periods. Age is a convenient label to record the progress of children's development. Grade level designations which are tied to age are commonly used to indicate segments of the child audience for which particular programs are targeted. Four age-grade levels cover the range of the child audience; preschool (ages 2-5), elementary (ages 5-11), junior high (ages 21-14), and secondary (age 15-17).

Television viewing opportunities. For each of the four age periods different patterns of daily activity lead to different patterns of potential viewing hours. One of the concerns often expressed by parents and educators is related to the number of hours children spend watching television per day or per week. Many feel that television viewing hours consume, for many children, a disproportionate number of their waking hours; and that television viewing precludes children's participation in other forms of developmentally desirable activities. It is meaningless to report hours of television viewing

without also reporting a reference point for baseline activity hours. Few studies do this.

Broadcasters, program designers, and program producers need to have available credible figures on television viewing that reflect both viewing opportunities and desirable levels of viewing by age group and setting. Before large-scale initatives to encourage new programming are mounted, desirable usage estimate patterns should be determined, so that children of different age groups are not inadvertently overloaded with television viewing opportunities. It seems possible that an optimal level of television series availability could be estimated for each age group for both home and school viewing.

Developmental characteristics. Age groupings and patterns for television viewing opportunities provide only the briefest indication of salient characteristics of children in different age periods. Developmental information for each age period can aid the television producer as well as the broadcaster in providing appealing, successful television programming for children of all ages. A massive body of psychological and educational literature exists in which information on children's developmental characteristics is described, summarized, and extended through the interpretation of new research evidence. In order to effectively utilize this literature, some basic points must be clarified.

1. Developmental change is never abrupt or distinct; but always a gradual emerging of new, predominating behavior patterns. Since television producers and broadcasters know that children's groups other than the major target audience frequently view children's series, plans regarding program content and design may very well deliberately incorporate moderate fluctuations of developmentally appropriate material to capitalize on the expected extensions of the viewing audience.

2. Research on child development is guided by three theoretical perspectives which ultimately help to integrate findings and organize results; behaviorist, cognitive and maturationist. No one theoretical perspective prevails. Therefore, for the television producer and broadcaster desiring to utilize developmental

descriptions of children in different age periods for planning purposes, it is necessary to recognize the differences and understand the strengths of each of the major theoretical perspectives.

3. Seemingly obvious, but nevertheless important to clarify, is the fact that developmental information in the abstract, theoretical form in which it is typically presented is not directly useful to television producers and broadcasters. However, when translated into applicable terms, its relevance becomes immediately apparent.

Ecology of Viewing

For many, television viewing evokes an image of a passive, sitting child whose eyes are fixated on a changing screen image accompanied by audio. In reality, television viewing involves a complex assortment of situational factors which result in ecologically distinct settings. Yet, the majority of television studies strive to report average effects. Despite the newness of the concept of ecology of viewing, there is no doubt that to understand completely children's television programming, one must scrutinize the settings in which children and television series interface.

Ecological orientation and methodology. Ecology is generally defined as the study of environmental factors which relate in some way to behavior. The basic unit of analysis in ecological descriptive work is a behavior episode. Defined as a "standing pattern of behavior," behavior episodes are non-psychological and encompass the individual's pre-perceptual environment. For our purposes a behavior episode is equivalent to the event of television viewing. A television viewing event is characterized by a child viewing a television program. Onset, duration, and finish of the event are variables which need to be described. Television viewing events, then, are subjectively defined by function and delimited by observor judgment so that an integrated, continuous activity is recorded in its entirety. Systematic observation techniques, observor rating reliabilities, and anecdotal record reduction help to establish scientific rigor for this kind of analyses. For television viewing purposes, three categories of factors will encompass the viewing event and provide a substructure for event observation; entry, viewing and exit factors.

Television viewing event settings. Children's television viewing occurs in two primary settings, home and school. The three ecological factor

categories are at once similar and very different for these two settings. With the ecological event structure it is possible to compare the viewing context of a single child across two event locations or across same or different television series in each section. With enough individual observations, ecological viewing patterns can be constructed for each event location or across same or different television series in each setting. Ecological viewing patterns can be constructed for each event location so that general viewing contexts for children of specific ages or specific series' audiences are identifiable. Such ecological viewing patterns could provide producers, broadcasters, parents, and teachers ideas for targeting and maximizing viewing of programs. The ecological event structure with specific factors for the two major child viewing locations offers the possibility of organizing research results and outcomes from basic and applied research in a format meaningful for producers and consumers.

Definitions of Program Type

From a context of ecological perspective, type of program viewed can be merely one more factor in the ecological analysis structure. Television programs or series are to the producer and broadcaster, however, a much more significant part of the behavior episode of television viewing. Rather than treat different program types as an ecological factor, we can place the television program at the interface of child audience and viewing ecology. In this position the program becomes a critical stimulus for behaviors and responses, and no longer can be considered an environmental factor of a non-psychological nature.

Assessments of children's programs always involve some form of categorization of program type. Surrounding this categorization effort is a semantic tangle of category labels and definitional meanings. At issue, basically, are which programs are instructional and which are not. Decisions regarding scheduling, marketability, and even funding may be based on a particular program's label. Many feel all programs are instructional, others say all programs should be designed to be multi-purpose and amenable to several purposes. Standardized, universally accepted definitions may be impossible to write. Three approaches to definitional determination are discussed

as a means of highlighting issues of concern regarding program definitions and explicating the distinctive stimulus properties of each program type as it functions at the interface of child audience and television viewing settings.

Program as product. Nominal categories for program subjects are frequently used to classify programs. Programs are frequently classified solely on the time of broadcast (instructional or general) or on the presumed location of viewing (home or school). Such gross categorizations fail to provide much useful information about program content and provide no useful information concerning behaviors likely to be elicited by different types of programs.

Program design. Another approach to defining programs looks beyond the previous "whole-program" classification approach and focuses more selectively on the intent of the program design. The design for program content and treatment is viewed as a means to specify a viewing purpose of the child.

Design approaches to program definition are much more sophisticated and comprehensive than the previously discussed product approach. From an ecological perspective however, design approaches capture only the intended or expected impact of a program on a child's behavior, not the actual behaviors elicited by the program. Design approaches offer primarily a method of describing the stimulus elements of a program.

Coding of program content. Coding information from a television program involves the viewer and encompasses reception and processing activities that can vary greatly in intensity and sophistication. Television viewing allows the child to utilize either audio or visual channels, or both to receive programming. Different symbol systems are involved for each channel, creating the distinct possibility that different sets of mental skills may be required for each. It is probable that individual children may need to invest varying amounts of effort to process each channel.

The coding definition of INSTRUCTIONAL programming presumes high levels of child investment in processing program content. Programs could be designed to require high viewer investment or may be mediated "upward" by

significant adults in the viewing settings. INFORMATIVE programming from a coding standpoint would result from either a child's voluntary investment in a program or partial contributions of program design or adult mediation. ENTERTAINMENT programs occur, then, when a child's coding activities are low or sporadic; but interest remains high.

Children, as most adults, turn to television for entertainment. Certainly no one would deny children the opportunity to view television for fun and relaxation. Yet, because television also functions as an instructional medium for children; producers, broadcasters, and policy makers must deal with issues related to the relative amount of instructional, informative, and entertainment programming available for children. Coding approaches to program definitions can allow for understanding and planned differentiation of program impact on children's behaviors. Obviously strategic adult mediation can radically change a program's impact.

Implications

Television profiles. Developmental data on children of various ages needs to be available for producers and broadcasters. Basic developmental information needs to be selected and formatted to match needs and use patterns of the television community. While consideration of children's developmental characteristics undoubtedly figures in all current work, an easily accessible, systematically organized resource such as television profiles could contribute greatly to program planning and broadcast scheduling. Creation of television profiles is a synthesis and translation activity that will make universally available to the children's television community critical information from other disciplines.

Television viewing patterns. Much effort is expended in designing and producing television series for children. Formative evaluation is increasingly utilized to predict or improve program appeal. Audience measures are widely quoted as indices of program success. Yet, what actually occurs when children view a program, the ecological context of viewing is generally ignored. The proposed television viewing patterns for home and school settings would provide this missing information. The who, how, and where of television viewing both logically and empirically affects the ultimate market place acceptance of new series.

Information coding and television series. As long as program definitions and labels ignore the child's responses to a particular program, assessments of program content will be very one-sided (adult-oriented). How children process information from television programs dramatically affects the ultimate impact any program or series will have. Basic research on children's information coding needs to be reviewed, summarized and made available to the television community. Programs need to be designed and evaluated in terms of child viewer potentials for information processing.

B. Television Series for Children

Children's television series exist within a complex setting and are best understood in relation to that overall setting. This section is both a guide and a description of the system context for children's television programming. Starting with general explanations of broadcast components, the distribution and flow of children's television series is traced throughout the system. The current inventory of children's television series is described through catalog lists and series inclusion on current broadcast schedules. Using this current year information as a base surveys and reports of series in prior years are analyzed and compared. Completing the overview of current series is a description of projections for upcoming series and a discussion of series' funding realities and constraints.

Information sources and data utilized in this section reflect the existing disparity between instructional and general children's television programming. A very few sources produce or distribute general children's programming; yet broadcast hours for these few series are high. Many producers and distributors are concerned with instructional television programming for children; yet in comparison total broadcast hours are somewhat modest.

Distribution of Children's Television Series

Non-commercial television programming for children exists within the larger setting of the public broadcast system. Understanding the place and function of significant components of the larger system is essential to a basic understanding of any aspect of children's television programming. Overseen by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) and serviced by the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) the "system" encompasses a present universe

of over 200 public television stations. Allied by common purposes and regulations, technical transmission realities, and financial dependency, these components of the "system" are simultaneously characterized by divergent perceptions of broadcast needs, by varying levels of local production potential, scheduling priorities, and by changing mixes and stability of funding sources.

General distribution patterns. Distribution of children's programming is dynamic. Periodic events related to yearly program acquisition, funding opportunities, daily broadcast scheduling concerns and the longer-range impacts of new series production and needs assessment continuously affect the flow of programming. Sources of programming are PBS, regional buying cooperatives, local productions, independent acquisitions, and special interest groups. Most available children's programming becomes part of a station's instructional program component.

Distribution concerns. Children's broadcast periods are typically labelled before school, during school, after school, and early evening. Preschool children, not in school, can be presumed to be an available audience during all four periods. Elementary and Secondary children are considered to be responsive to general children's programming before and after school hours and in early evening, and to be an instructional audience during school. For daily before and after school viewing, early evening, and weekend viewing, children's programs are scheduled not to block-out general audience programming or to interfere with prime time adult viewing.

Within the school setting, programs of shorter length (15 minutes) are preferred to the more typical at-home setting programs of longer length (30-60 minutes). The elementary classroom with a fixed meeting place, continuing teacher, multi-subject curriculum, and relatively homogeneous viewing group is closest to an ideal audience for instructional broadcast scheduling. The scheduling situation for secondary settings and many junior high schools is very different. Multiple teachers, non-standardized class schedules across schools, diverse audience interest, and motivations contribute to scheduling difficulties. The magnitude of the scheduling difficulties at these levels is such that reasonable justification exists for treating upper level instructional broadcast scheduling as a separate, distinct entity which may require unique approaches.

Working equipment is simply a basic necessity for television utilization in the schools. And, like any other technologically sophisticated area, equipment becomes obsolete as newer, more streamlined designs are produced. Scheduling constraints that potentially are resolved through wider use of video tape and cassette recorders may be financially impossible to consider. Expansion of cable and ITFS services may never maximize their potentials for similar financial reasons.

Recent changes in the Copyright Law have created considerable confusion of interpretation regarding their applicability to both commercial and non-commercial television broadcasts. Such rights affect legally allowable "fair use" of material by educators, re-record rights for stations and schools, and residual and perpetuity rights' payments to professional performance and craft guilds.

Current Television Series for Children

A large number of children's series presently are available for broadcast use. Estimates of the total number of series now in existence range up to 3000 separate series. Such a stock, while impressive in terms of sheer number, must nevertheless be judged by more discriminating criteria before a reasonable estimate of "usable" series can be determined. For example: worn-out, outdated series, poor quality productions, and poorly conceived subject treatments within programs render many existing series unpalatable to potential audiences. Judging series on the basis of subjective criteria of worth is at best difficult and at worse presumptious. However, some realistic appraisal of "usable" versus "available" stock is necessary.

Two types of information about series availability are helpful in gauging the extent of usability of existing stock. First, by looking at series currently available through major distribution channels, a picture of perceived marketable series emerges. Both private and commercial groups compile catalogs of series which they perceive will match consumer needs. Second, simple utilization data of series in the broadcast system gives another indication of usability. Scheduling of programs, as indicated by use statistics, is one index of which programs in the existing stock are in demand.

Cataloged series. Approximately 200 series are available in the current catalog lists of the Agency for Instructional Television (AIT), Great Plains National Instructional Television Library (GPNITVL), International ITV Co-op (ITV Co-op), Ontario Educational Communications Authority (OECA), and Western Instructional Television (WITV). The legislated mission of the Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA) is to assist schools in desegregation, to encourage reduction of minority group isolation, and to help overcome adverse educational effects of such isolation. Within the parameters of its particular mission, ESAA-TV has funded a substantial number of series for children. Local productions, special interest groups, and some government agencies have series available in such small numbers or as part of more general media packages that catalog listings are not feasible. Series from these sources do find their way onto broadcast schedules because of the diligence of station ITV directors and regional network directors.

Scheduled series. Through the interconnection network, PBS feeds both an A.M. and P.M. schedule with children's programming. Programs broadcast are acquired through the yearly SPC, are productions federally funded, are programs in the Public Television Library (PTL) or are general audience programs deemed educationally useful. A complementary data source for current series is Spergel's CPB sponsored study on Survey of Instructional Programming 1978-1979. Based on 148 licensee responses (93.7% of total), Spergel identified a total of 1,066 series currently used in preschool - grade 12. Spergel's study deals with the top 139 programs (13%) which were used by 10 or more licensees.

Responses by persons interviewed to questions about the characteristics of the existing stock of children's programming tended to reflect a common set of perceptions stated with widely varying degrees of intensity and concern: (1) observation that there is not enough good children's programming, (2) aging stock of series, (3) gaps in age and subject series' coverage, and (4) a sense that ITV and children's programming are standing still.

Recent Children's Series Data

Additions to the stock of children's series are small in number each year, though often new series make significant inroads in broadcast schedules

and encourage series' spin-offs of similar content treatment or production techniques. Several analyses of recent broadcast years while based on slightly different series inventories, different distribution patterns, and even different numbers of members PBS stations; nevertheless, provide useful comparative data for the current year's situation. Series data from previous years is reviewed in chronological order.

Broadcast year 1975. A CPB report by Dirr & Spergel, titled A Study of Public Television's Educational Services, 1975-1976 notes the subject matter and grade level distribution of instructional programming. PBS data illustrates the limited amount of general children's programming and instructionally utilized programming distributed through PBS in 1975.

Broadcast year 1976. Public Television Programming by Category: 1976, a CPB study by Katzman & Wirt provides data in 1976. Katzman & Wirt's careful sampling probably make the 1976 study data more valid estimates of the 1976 situation than Spergel's use of the top 13% of instructional programs for 1978.

Projections and Funding for Series

Projections for series indicate a relatively low number of new series will be available in the coming broadcast year. Six funding patterns are currently used to fund new series; contract-award funding, consortia funding, consortia step funding, lease after production, enhancement funding, and continuation funding.

No one interviewed believes there is enough money available for children's programming or even enough money for public television. Available dollars are either concentrated in ESAA-TV's mission regulated programs or are subject to seemingly unpredictable organizational priorities for broadcast expenditure. Low total dollar and somewhat unreliable total dollar availability are great concerns. Tied to low dollar available is the reality of production output. Even the best orchestrated consortia-contract funding mixes produce low yearly series' outputs. States and other agencies committed to children's programming often spread investments over several budget years to effect even the current slow rate of production. The result is a roller-coaster pattern of dollar infusion which corresponds to peak and low series' production

years. Without some kind of rational direction for overall funding, even consortia projects within agencies will begin to "cross and stall" unmercifully in each others' fiscal tracks.

Summary and Analysis

Distribution.

1. Children's programming is concentrated primarily in instructional schedules.

2. Few producers and distribution groups find it practical to market programs for the general children's schedule.

3. Within the ITV schedule, elementary audience programs are easiest to schedule, preschool audiences not usually considered, and secondary audiences very difficult to schedule.

4. Innovative uses or increased access to more flexible transmission modes remain an outside possibility to resolve scheduling difficulties.

5. Copyright issues are unclear and need to be resolved.

6. Interconnection potentials are being proposed to effect economies of scale in transmission.

Current television series for children

1. A relatively small core of widely used children's series both instructional and general currently exists.

2. Wide variations of use patterns occur across the inventory of existing series.

3. Most children's programming is targeted for a primary-intermediate age audience.

4. Two major programs are targeted for preschool children (Mister Rogers' Neighborhood and Sesame Street) and are generally broadcast outside instructional hours.

5. Secondary instructional programming exists in moderate amounts. It is not clear if low utilization is the result of poor quality, content - need mismatches or scheduling difficulties.

6. Most children's programming is concentrated in a few subject areas. It is not clear if this clustering reflects true need/demand or represents chance accumulation.

Recent children's series.

1. Data collection differences made comparison across broadcast years difficult.

2. Not many new productions achieve widespread use. There are few "big hits" in instructional television.

3. It appears that current uneven concentrations of age and content for children's series represent long-standing conditions and are not recent occurrences.

Projections and funding for series.

1. Very little children's programming is in production. The existing inventory for both instructional and general series is aging faster than replacement, revision or extension efforts combined can match.

2. Funds for series are scarce.

3. Innovative funding patterns may maximize limited dollar resources to a certain extent.

4. Fiscal realities may cause difficult prioritizing. Some type of overall plan is needed.

Implications

General children's programming. Few series are produced or scheduled for children's audiences outside of the ITV time blocks. Is this an area of critical need? What types of programming could address this audience/schedule time gap? Where will the impetus for such programming come from?

Instructional preschool programming. Mister Rogers' Neighborhood and Sesame Street are series widely available for at-home viewing by preschool audiences. Program length and broadcast schedules generally preclude use in school settings. Does anyone care? If appropriate material (content and schedule) was more widely available, would there be a demand for it? What use, if any, do preschool children get from programming targeted for older age groups.

Secondary programming. The current small number of utilized series and scheduling difficulties raise many questions. What are the needs of the secondary age group for both instructional and general programming? Should a concerted effort be made to tailor or modify current ITV strategies to capture and expand the secondary market? Can teachers and even students provide help in effecting significant changes at this level?

Uneven age and content concentration of current series' stock. Should this existing uneven concentration be exploited and viewed as an asset or should future programming plans strive to even out imbalances? How can curriculum needs (present and future) be reconciled with existing inventory?

Production rate for new series. The rate reflects funding and development constraints, not demand. Is there a need for leadership to energize the field and build momentum for progress? How can a series' need/dollar resource crunch be avoided, coped with, or dealt with rationally?

Production/series' costs. More money is needed. Copyright issues must be resolved. Can a plan be developed to coordinate resources and encourage cooperation in dealing with fiscal issues? Will collective advocacy for children's television programming open the minds and purses of those in positions to help?

Program Utilization and Needs Assessment

The analysis of program availability and scheduling has provided an important component to this overview of children's programming. Data on programs and schedules are part of the management system in public broadcasting, and consequently they are available in more systematic forms than information on actual use in schools. Some studies have been conducted on how teachers use educational programming, as well as the programming needs perceived by teachers and other professionals. Much of this research is piecemeal, and the nature of the studies testifies to the recency of interest in nationwide utilization and the under developed character of needs assessment research. In large part, the discussion of needs assessment involves describing possible methods and noting insufficiencies in current knowledge.

Studies of Utilization

The School TV Utilization Study (SUS) sponsored by CPB assessment of how American teachers use television in their classrooms. The sampling plan for the study appears to have been sound and, through persistent follow-up efforts, high response rate were achieved (superintendents--96 percent, principals--89 percent, and teachers--85 percent). Because of its scope and the quality of its sample, the study is clearly the landmark in the area of utilization. Analyses apparently are still being conducted, and widely available summaries have not yet been developed.

The Ontario Educational Communications Authority conducted a study in 1977 of the use of TV in the classroom by Ontario school teachers.
While the study was not as ambitious in sampling frame and scope as the SUS project, it holds considerable interest because it enables a virtual replication of some of the findings of the American study.

Many public broadcasting outlets, particularly if they are state network, conducted some type of annual assessment of their ITV operations. The Kentucky Educational Television Network (KET) conducts a comprehensive school utilization study each year. (Kentucky Educational Television School Utilization Summary Report 1977-78).

It provides considerable data about the use of ITV in Kentucky; certain highlights complement the utilization studies just reviewed.

Needs Assessment

There would appear to be good logic in a process which might identify areas of need for children's programming prior to the development of plans for specific programs. Needs assessment could aid both funding agencies and producers in setting priorities for their efforts. In practice, formal needs assessments have been conducted only for ITV programming, in part because a constituency for such programming (i.e. teachers, and educational administrators) is clear. In the case of general children's programming, however, the concept of needs assessment in less developed, and most procedures tend to be ad hoc. As part of the planning stage of a new program, an analysis of needs is likely to be done. An important purpose of such analysis of needs is often to help secure funding for the program.

Forms of needs assessment. Expert analysis and review, the most common form of needs assessment, involves drawing upon the knowledge and analytic skills of experts. When asked how a need for a type of program was determined, a common response followed these lines. "We're professionals in this area (education, children's programming), and we're in contact with other professionals in the field." Indeed, initial assessment of needs probably occurs most often in the format of professionals within and between organizations discussing children's programming. Particularly for school audience programming, needs assessment has taken the form of systematic surveys. Teachers, curriculum specialists and principals have been included in surveys. A different focus upon determining needs for programming uses students as the starting point. Their current abilities, information level, or life problems can be described, and needs formulated on the basis of this type of status report.

An implicit part of every assessment of the need for new programming involves reviewing current offerings and relating them to scheduling. What gaps do there appear to be? What age groups or substantive topics are missing? Usually this process is an informal, even if a thoughtful exercise. McKelvey at AIT has attempted to relate available programs to potential demand in a more formal manner. It is an approach to developing a quantitative estimate

of needs for programs at each grade level and in each subject by matching the number of available ITV program units with the amount of time reasonable to allocate to ITV. Certain qualitative judgments remain in the model, for example, estimating the amount of time reasonable to allocate to ITV. Likewise, the quality of the available programs themselves should have a role. The approach does seem to advance the level of understanding of needs assessment by explicitly introducing an estimate of potential demand for ITV at each grade level and subject.

Recent findings about needs. After reviewing these different forms of needs assessment, it is rather disappointing to report that there is no general body of findings about needs for children's programming. Most of the needs assessment activities that have been found have tended to be informal, or local, or linked to the development of specific programs. A few studies have attempted phrasing the question of needs broadly enough for the objectives of this project.

Margaret Villarreal submitted a report to CPB's office of Educational Activities dated August 1978 entitled K-12 Curriculum Needs Assessments and Public Broadcasting. In this project, public broadcasting organizations and educational authorities were contacted and queried about studies which they may have conducted concerning curriculum needs that could be served by instructional broadcasting. Nine usable studies were identified and compared. In a follow-up survey, the list of needs identified by aggregating the nine studies was evaluated by 13 contact persons in the educational and broadcasting organizations.

Villarreal's report merits reading by those interested in curriculum needs assessment for public broadcasting because of its lonely status in attempting to draw broad gauge conclusions. However, it may be more important for its methodological points than for its substantive findings. It was found difficult to meaningfully summarize varied local studies which had often been conducted in non-comparable ways. Almost any manner of aggregating the findings could have been open to some criticism because of different ways in which the curriculum subjects has been measured across studies.

The 1978 ITV Co-Op Curriculum Survey was conducted among ITV Directors in the U.S., Canada, Trust Territories, and Foreign Countries. A total of 107 responses were received from the mail survey (with a 31 percent response rate).

The purpose of the study was to suggest priorities for children's programming. The Ontario Educational Communications Authority conducts surveys of teachers to determine curriculum needs and factors affecting use of educational programming. In 1978 the results of three of these Ascertainment Studies were reported, studies of English, Mathematics, and Science.

In November 1978, the Office of Educational Activities conducted a mail survey of Program Managers and ITV Directors to assess their perception of areas of need for children's programming. The results of this survey are going to receive further analysis in the form of a CPB internal report. Overall, the study exemplifies how a type of needs assessment can be carried out on a national level. It's findings are perhaps most interesting in how they converge with similar studies conducted by Villarreal and the ITV Co-Op.

Opinions on needs. During the course of assembling studies, many individuals were informally interviewed about the process of needs assessment and current needs in children's programming. Some of the points made in conversation raise issues mentioned nowhere else. Accordingly, some opinions about areas of need are presented to represent the flavor of individual opinions.

1. Multi-cultural or bi-lingual programming should not be targeted only for minorities but rather designed to appeal to a general audience.

2. Training for teachers in the use of broadcast materials is needed.

3. Programming is needed in government at the secondary level and in geography at the primary level.

4. Primary programming is needed; there is a glut of programs in grades 4-8.

5. Programming for teenagers is needed, specifically program to be viewed at home.

Potential hazards of needs assessment. Needs assessment should not be a barrier to good ideas. Some good products create needs, and conducting needs assessment may lead to priorities which could stifle novel programming.

The time frame for needs assessment will be a continual problem. Surveys typically illuminate people's experience of the recent past, where as needs assessment must be prospective. Planning, research and production on a new series probably requires a minimum of two years, and the series may take a few years to catch on and acquire an audience. Lack of experience on the part of teachers, decision-makers, or audiences may be reflected in low endorsement of a type of program as a need. Simply because few programs with given objectives have been produced in the past, needs for such programming might not be perceived.

Summary and Analysis

1. The attitudes of teachers towards classroom television can be characterized as predominately positive or neutral, but not negative.

2. Most teachers have used instructional television, and approximately 30 percent use it regularly. Elementary school teachers use it far more than secondary teachers. Elementary teachers primarily use off-air broadcasts, while teachers of older students often use videotapes.

3. Primary hindrances to the use of ITV as perceived by teachers relate to program availability, scheduling and information, and equipment availability. Program availability was also judged to be an important facilitator by many teachers.

4. Findings from the School TV Utilization Study have considerable interest to professionals in children's programming. They are awaiting the final reports on this set of studies conducted by CPB.

5. On-going, formal needs assessment in the area of children's programming appears not to exist at the national level.

6. Some organizations do conduct needs assessments of various sorts, e.g. AIT, state education agencies, PBS outlets, and the ITV Co-Op, but the results of these efforts do not appear to be very helpful to CPB in identifying priorities for children's programming. Much needs assessment in linked to specific programs.

7. Different models exist for needs assessment including expert analysis, conducting surveys, assessments of student needs, matching program availability with potential demand, and probably others. A comprehensive assessment may draw upon several of these models.

8. From the Villarreal review of regional needs assessments, and from the ITV Co-Op survey, it appears that perceived needs may be greatest in the areas of basic skills. The procedural differences in the original studies, and the relatively global approach to identifying needs in the original questionnaires, mean that these conclusions should only be viewed as suggestive.

9. Formal needs assessment may involve hazards associated with stifling creative ideas, rapid obsolescence of information for prediction purposes, and the difficulty of measuring unrecognized needs.

Implications

Monitoring results. The results of these studies appear to be of considerable interest to professionals in children's programming. Reports for both the researcher and non-researcher might be useful. Seemingly, this information could serve an important public relations function for educators and broadcasters. The studies would also impact CPB's deliberations about new children's programming.

Completing the SUS studies. The SUS was a massive one-shot study. Should smaller scale utilization studies with more rapid turn-around be conducted on a regular basis? The OECA utilization studies provide a model for such less costly, ongoing efforts.

Assessing needs for children's programming. Villarreal has recommended that a methodology be developed for national needs assessment for educational programming. Survey instruments, and other procedures, might be usable on a regional basis as well as nationally.

Evaluation and Audience Research

Children and television has been an active research area in the 1970s. The research has been characterized by a number of different focal points; for example, television and violence, advertising directed towards children, the magnitude of viewing by children, evaluations of purposive programming, etc. Much of this research is outside the scope of the current project, for reasons of time and resources, if no other. Certain topics are central to CPB's planning in the area of children's programming, however, and will be examined under the rubrics of evaluation research and audience research.

Evaluation Research

Different types of research related to children's programming were discussed in a paper by Mielke titled Decision-Oriented Research in School Television - Policy Brief for the Agency in Instructional Television. The distinctions drawn between background research, formative research, summative research, and policy research appear to be a useful framework.

Background research. Background research is used to aid planning at its earliest stages. Before production is begun, before objectives and audiences are finalized, information should be assembled which will help planners make decisions. The present paper is designed to serve part of this background research function.

Background research would appear to be one of CPB's primary informational opportunities. Local outlets, producers of children's programming, and most other constituents in the arena of public broadcasting have more parochial interests than CPB. Joint sponsorship of the School TV Utilization Study is an example of generating information about the functioning and needs of ITV. Similarly, audience research, whether it issues from CPB or PBS provides an important information base for members of the public broadcasting community. Needs assessment, particularly if it is a continuing process, is a major form of background research. Fresh data collection may not always be involved. Organizing information and expert review can be valuable functions. Various approaches to needs assessment exist but national-level needs assessment in children's programming appears to lack a sponsor at the present time.

Formative research. This provides feedback to the production staff, enabling them to modify and improve the product before the final production decisions have been made. Formative research is typically linked to a specific program. Not surprisingly, organizations which are involved in program production carry out most formative research. It is unlikely that CPB will itself conduct much formative research; however, its commitment to formative research should be clear. As producers like CTW, OECA, AIT or others generate findings, it might be useful for CPB to sponsor (or urge NSF or USOE to sponsor) occasional reviews or attempts at synthesis. Most formative research is highly specific to programs and procedures; yet it would appear to be a useful scientific enterprise to attempt to make formative research more cumulative.

Summative research. Summative research looks at effects. Has the program or series achieved its objectives? Those who fund programming are often the primary consumers of summative research. Since CPB has a funding role, it has periodically been involved in summative research activities. Summative research reports appear to be more readily available for general children's programming than for ITV programs. ITV programs may be somewhat simpler to evaluate, and summative activities may be procedurally more like formative research because both can be conducted in classrooms with captive students. Whatever the reason, few ITV programs have highly visible summative evaluations like Sesame Street.

Summative research on children's programming, like formative research, has tended to be highly program-specific. In the longer run, it would be desirable if a body of knowledge about program effects could be constructed. The research literature may still be too young to lead to satisfactory generalizations, but CPB might consider over the long term, the benefits of attempting to organize this research.

Policy research. A fourth research function provides information for decision making about policy. Examples of research of this sort might be audience research, utilization studies, needs assessment, reviews of psychological or social factors in viewing - activities which are analogous to background research. While background research serves planning for specific programs, policy research obviously is aimed at broader questions. The data base for both

types of research might be the same, but the consumers of the information may differ. Because CPB more than most other organizations has interests of national scope, it tends to be involved in policy research.

Audience Research

The reach of children's programming has been the subject of study both for ITV and for general children's programming on public stations. When the research addresses the ITV audience, data are usually collected through surveying teachers and the studies are labeled utilization studies.

Nielsen measurement. When the audience for general programming is studied, the research is usually (not always) conducted in households. This fact introduces a few advantages and many problems. An audience research mechanism, is already in place, furnished by the A. C. Nielsen Co., which has great visibility and commercial acceptance. For studying the audience for public broadcasting and for children's programming, however, Nielsen data has certain drawbacks. Even with all these limitations for understanding the public broadcasting audience, and specifically the children's audience, Nielsen measurement provides an on going, comprehensive source of data. Setting up a duplicate system is likely to be prohibitively expensive. Researchers of public broadcasting audiences may need to supplement and clarify Nielsen data with their own custom research.

Changing size of the children's audience. Children are not yet a vanishing species, but in this decade their numbers have been gradually declining. A more dramatic trend has been the increase in household formation. Audience data are often based upon TV households and with an increase in such households coupled with a decrease in the number of children, children's programming will have to run hard to stay even in terms of audience share. Clearly, discussion of audiences and expectations about the audience size for new children's programming should be put in the context of these age trends.

Children's TV viewership. Preschool children (ages 2-5) are heavy viewers of television, watching about 27 and one-half hours per week, children 6-11 average 24 and one-half hours, and teenagers about 22 hours per week. Not surprisingly preschool children are relatively heavy viewers during the weekday. Preschool, elementary and high school children view more television during the 4:30-7:30 time period than other audience groups. For all groups

of children through age 17, the greatest amount of television viewing occurs during prime time (8-11 PM Monday to Saturday and 7-11 PM Sunday). Data is from Nielsen: 1978.

Commercial networks, when they program for children, arrange their schedules with data of this sort in mind. Public broadcasting likewise tends to reflect these viewing patterns in its schedule by placing much of its children's programming in the after school hours. In prime time when children do their greatest viewing, they must compete with adults for programs both on commercial and public television.

Audience for Sesame Street and Electric Company. Sesame Street and The Electric Company, both produced by the Children's Television Workshop, have been the most popular children's programs broadcast on PTV. Sesame Street is now in its ninth year; The Electric Company, which started a year later, is no longer under production, but is in its second year of presenting repeat shows. In 1978 CTW commissioned a series of studies to explore audience size and dynamics primarily of Sesame Street, but some information about The Electric Company has also been collected.

OECA analyses of the children's audience. Two papers written by members of the Research and Planning Division of the Ontario Educational Communications Authority use audience data to suggest additional opportunities for general children's programming on PTV. OECA audience research, as well as audience data on PBS, could be used to identify scheduling opportunities for children's programs. These opportunities suggested by OECA research, i.e., more family-directed programming during early prime time, Sunday morning children's programming, and a noticeable gap in the teen audience, might be starting points if expanding the schedule for children is considered.

Studies of children's viewing of types of programs. While commercial networks and advertisers who market to children presumably have considerable information on interests and viewing patterns of children, only two recent reports were uncovered that are public sector documents. Research on the types of programs which children like to view and do view is useful background for planners and producers who are involved in public television children's programming. One of the studies was conducted by CTW as formative research for the new Science program which is under development; the other study dealt the children's audience for news programming.

Summary and Analysis

1. The role of CPB in evaluation research is primarily in background, summative, and policy research. Formative research is conducted principally by producers.

2. Some children's programming, e.g., Sesame Street and The Electric Company, has been shown to be successful in reaching large numbers of children of all groups and achieving educational objectives. Comprehensive, summative evaluations of ITV programs are hard to locate.

3. The size of the potential children's audience is gradually decreasing.

4. Nielsen data, the primary source of information on audiences, is not fully satisfactory for public children's programming. This source of data is insufficient for elaborate analysis and the diary data may be somewhat biased.

5. Children and households with children are a disproportionately large component of the audience for public broadcasting. Canadian data, however, suggest that teens may be under-represented in the PTV audience.

6. Children from preschool age through teens view TV heavily in the early evening. Canadian data suggest that Sunday morning can be a time period for large children's audiences on PTV.

Implications for Research

In the course of this selective review of evaluation and audience research, certain gaps in knowledge or method have been identified. CPB or other organizations might address, or continue to address, the following research issues.

1. Formative research on children's programming is highly specific by intent. However, occasional reviews of formative research findings or procedures might set the groundwork for more cumulative knowledge.

2. Summative research on children's programming might also profit from attempts at synthesis.

3. Alternatives or supplements to Nielsen audience data appear to be needed for better understanding the PTV audience. CTW's finding that diaries appear to underestimate children's viewing deserves analysis or replication.

Constituent Concerns

The role that concerned constituents play in formulating policy on children's television and implementing decisions and findings is at once difficult to describe and easy to underestimate. Single constituent groups may have concerns for children's television that are secondary to their organization's main purposes. Individual constituents may raise prickly issues or pursue an abrasive course of action. Some constituents may specialize in philosophy and ethical concerns while others flex with pride their financial muscles. Yet, collectively these constituents exert great influence on the shape and character of children's television programming. They are truly the "kitchen cabinet" of children's television.

Parents

For a variety of reasons parents are becoming an increasingly aroused and vocal group concerned with children's television. While parents' rights of responsibility for the developmental experiences of their children have always been accepted, only within the last five years or so have individual and groups of parents felt the strong need to persistently speak-out about that ubiquitous, home-fixture of television. Through popular press attention to television's role in children's development, publicized concerns of the schools regarding television's effect on learning, and probably close observation of their own children's viewing habits and the content of available program parents have become more sensitized to television. Individual parents now speak out about their concerns, seek out others who are concerned, and organize to increase their power and resources.

Ideas and activities of several parent-based or groups are described; Action for Children's Television (ACT), Family Communications Institute (FCI), National Congress of Parents and Teachers (PTA), and various parent guides. Parental concerns regarding children and television are expressed at both the individual and group levels. Parents are an alerted constituency, growing rapidly in the numbers and sophistication necessary to impact the television community. Those attempting to establish policy in any areas related to children and television can expect scrutiny, input, and evaluation from parents and parent-based groups.

Educational Interest Groups

For instructional television, teachers are surrogate consumers; for it is the teacher who controls the entry of the television program into the classroom. As managers of the classroom learning environment, teachers must select television programming appropriate for their curriculum objectives, orchestrate through equipment and broadcast schedules students' viewing and must provide instructional integration for the program content. Much more consistently than parents in the home setting, teachers can act as arbitors of children's television viewing. Many teacher organizations have collected information from members regarding instructional television issues. In addition many professional organizations in response to membership initiatives have focused efforts at the national and local level on specific television concerns.

Educational interest groups represented in the report are Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT), Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), International ITV Co-op (ITV Co-op), Joint Council on Educational Technology (JCET), National Association of Educational Broadcasters (NAEB), National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), and the National Education Association (NEA).

Educational interest groups do not evidence a single focus of concern regarding children's television programming. Rather, depending on their members' positions in their respective educational hierarchies, various organizations can be expected to promote varying levels of issues and concerns. Organizations of teachers have very immediate utilization concerns and pragmatic information needs. Organizations of media specialists or broadcast specialists can be expected to emphasize more technical or conceptual concerns.

Professionals in Other Fields

Professionals in many areas frequently focus interest and energy on children and their welfare. In many fields professionals have expressed strong concerns regarding children and television, often bringing considerable expertise to bear on issues and activities. It is this particular element of professional skill or expertise on special topics which differentiates various professional constituencies from parents and the general public.

Researchers in academia and government have contributed to a rapidly growing literature on television's influences on children's behavior, cognitive development, and socialization patterns. The members of the American Library Association (ALA), the American Medical Association (AMA), and the Children's Theater Association sponsor on-going membership activity in the area of children's television programming.

Research findings and organizational activities of professional groups clearly contribute to the general body of information about children and television. Systematic efforts to identify, translate, and disseminate this information are not made. Beyond the problem of duplication of effort is the potential of greater loss when existing expertise is not available for problem resolution or creative initiatives in television programming.

Special Interest, Public, and Legislative Concerns

Public interest groups, lobbyists, commercial enterprises, governmental regulatory agencies, and legislative groups have variously expressed interest in and pursued activities on issues relating to children and television. Often, the concerns of these groups are slow in maturing, as efforts are characterized by long-term study and sustained pressure and influence on targeted issues.

Groups discussed in the report are Federal Communications Commission (FCC), Federal Trade Commission (FTC), National Council on Children and Television (NCCT), Public Interest Satellite Association (PISA), Public Service Satellite Consortium (PSSC), and the Television Information Office (TIO) General Information on congressional, business, and legislative activities is presented.

The range of concerns and activities among constituents in this group is great. Most individual groups are either firmly committed to particular activities or missions or subject to influences and opinion in a manner which guarantees continual changes of policy and objectives.

Implications

Parents. Parent groups are an alerted, influential surrogate consumer group for children's television programming. In what ways can parents' concerns and activities be mobilized to support expansion and upgrading of public broadcast programming for children? What strategies are most effective and feasible for parents to use for guiding at-home viewing? What special service can or will parents require from public television in order to extend the impact of television.

Educational interests. Are teachers really turned off by instructional television? The issue demands to be resolved before further initiatives are made to support or expand instructional programming. Various educational interest groups can become extremely influential advocates for children's broadcast programming. Teachers need to be the ones to demand money for instructional programming and equipment if legislators are going to seriously consider increased funding. How can advocacy groups be best organized to multiply impact? Astute identification and encouragement of organization-specific interests and strengths will maximize cooperation and minimize unproductive alliances.

Professional in other fields. Generally responsive to current trends and movements within their specialty areas, professional in fields other than education and broadcasting make significant contributions in areas related to children's television programming. How best can such expertise be identified and utilized by those within the mainstream of public broadcasting for children?

Special interest, public and legislative concerns. Legislation will always form a backdrop for public broadcasting efforts for children. How can legislative initiatives be "tracked" and monitored? In what ways can the public broadcast community realistically contribute to a supportive legislative climate for children's television programming?

Regulation is a reality. Monitoring of regulatory initiatives and activities is a must. Again, the broadcast community must remain alert and contribute whenever possible to regulatory activities by various agencies.

Funding for children's television programming can be increased in amount or perhaps freed somewhat from current "mission" restrictions. In what ways can special interest groups affect the funding situations? Are there viable alternatives for funding lying untapped amongst the members of this collection of groups?

Summary and Conclusions

The scope and substance of this report clearly reflects the complexity of the status of children's television programming within the public broadcasting system. Summary, analysis, and implication sections highlight the findings on each of the major topics covered in the report; children and television-context analysis, current programs for children, needs assessment and utilization studies, evaluation and audience research, and constituent concerns. The summarized findings of this section are derived from the topic-specific summaries of previous sections. At this point it is helpful to recognize that these summative conclusions are stated in general terms, subsuming the detail and topic specificity of the previous chapter summaries.

In summarizing findings across topics, several recurrent themes and related concerns emerge. Three general categories of conclusions will be used to summarize report findings; information needs, status of children's television series, and issues.

Information Needs

Several critical needs for information related to children's television series were found to exist.

1. Developmental data on children of various ages needs to be available for producers and broadcasters. Basic developmental information needs to be selected and formatted to match needs and use patterns of the television community. While consideration of children's developmental characteristics undoubtedly figures in all current work, an easily accessible, systematically organized resource could contribute greatly to program planning and broadcast scheduling. Creation of television profiles is a synthesis and translation activity that will make universally available to the children's television community critical information from other disciplines.

2. Much effort is expended in designing and producing television series for children. Formative evaluation is increasingly utilized to predict or improve program appeal. Audience measures are widely quoted as indices of program success. Yet, what actually occurs when children view a program; the ecological context of viewing is generally ignored. The proposed television viewing patterns for home and school settings would provide this missing information. The who, how, and where of television viewing both logically and empirically affects the ultimate market place acceptance of new series.

3. As long as program definitions and labels ignore the child's responses to a particular program, assessments of program content will be very one-sided (adult-oriented). How children process information from television programs dramatically affects the audience impact any program or series will have. Basic research on children's information coding needs to be be reviewed, summarized and made available to the television community. Programs need to be designed and evaluated in terms of child viewer potential for information processing.

4. Less clearly differentiated in specific detail throughout the report is the need for information on production and treatment variables. Message design, camera techniques, and action sequence patterns are a few of the many areas where existing knowledge and skill need to be aggregated and reported. Information on innovative, experimental, and audience-proven production techniques needs to be easily and quickly available.

5. Copyright information needs arise in two areas, interpretation and uniformity of availability. Effort needs to be invested to clarify the law for broadcast situations. In addition, clearances for children's programs could be negotiated according to some general guidelines so that mismatches of needs and use are minimized.

6. Are teachers really turned off by instructional television? The question demands to be answered definitively before further initiatives are made to support or expand instructional programming. Information should be collected or summarized on teacher training (preservice and

inservice) for media use, teacher attitudes toward media, teacher awareness of media availability, and perhaps most critical, information on how media is actually used in the classroom (instructional integration). Utilization studies provide important, highly relevant data; but utilization of television by teachers is only one way to answer the questions surrounding acceptance of instructional television as a teaching tool.

7. Needs assessment data for both general and instructional programming for children is currently limited either in quality or in scope of applicability. While questions remain regarding the most effective strategies for needs assessment, the need for such information by the television community is clear.

8. Formative research on children's television programming is highly specific by intent. Reviews of formative research procedures and findings could lay the ground work for more precision in the application of formative research to production, and more widespread use of formative evaluation techniques.

9. Nielsen audience data is, alone, insufficient to understand the PTV audience, particularly the children's audience. Planners and policy makers must have more accurate, comprehensive audience data for children's television programming.

Status of Children's Television Series

Series inventory and scheduling analysis, needs assessment reviews, and evaluation data contributed to identifying a number of specific points related to the current status of series for children available on public television.

1. Most programming for children is labelled instructional and intended for in-school viewing, with ITV consuming major portions of station broadcast schedules; however, a few general categories of children's programming account for most of the PBS carriage hours. Children's programming

is presently characterized by an imbalance between instructional (in-school) and general (at-home) programs.

2. A relatively small number of programs achieve "success" by any criteria. The "big hits" of children's programming may have some critical features in common, one feature possibly being careful formative research.

3. The current stock of children's television series is characterized by uneven age and content concentrations. Considerable evidence and prevailing opinion suggest this existing uneven concentration is not desirable; yet the existing concentrations are compatible with usage data. Should imbalance in series' stock be evened out by future programming? How can curriculum needs (present and future) and general children's programming needs be reconciled with the existing stock?

4. The secondary audience for both instructional and general programming is underserved by current broadcast schedules and acceptable series' stocks. The preschool audience is well serviced by current general audience programming, but not serviced at all by instructional programming. Do these two audience segments require special initiatives for new programming?

5. Broadcast scheduling situations vary markedly for the four major children's audience segments; preschool, elementary, junior high, and secondary. To a certain extent, series' needs, current series' stock, and series' subjects are critically tied to the realities of scheduling for each audience subgroup. Scheduling of instructional programs for each age group presents unique problems. General program scheduling concentrated now in the after-school hours may miss much of the children's audience. Is the present scheduling pattern for children's programming a default use of undesired adult audience air-time? Is there a need for a "children's block" within the early hours of adult prime time?

6. The production rate for new series is low. The rate reflects funding and production constraints, not demand.

7. Equipment and distribution options directly impact programming for children. Availability and condition of equipment is definitely a factor in programming use. Video cassettes, cable television, ITFS, and satellite interconnect impacts on children's programming potentials need to be pursued.

8. Utilization data, other than broadcast schedules for programs, is just beginning to become widely available. Regular, large scale surveys have not been done, so trend analyses are not possible.

Issues

A number of concerns have emerged from various sources regarding issues that affect future directions for children's public television programming.

1. Funding of programs is a major, if not overriding, concern for the future.

2. The future status of instructional programming for children is not certain. Current concentrations of instructional series in broadcast schedules and series' inventory do not necessarily guarantee future funding or production initiatives.

3. The future status of general programming for children is not certain. There appears to be some activity and growing sensitivity to needs for non-instructional programming for children.

4. Demographic data indicates that even though the number of households with TV's is going up, the number of children is going down. PBS has attracted households with children as a major viewing audience. Census declines may affect PBS audience demographics unless concerted efforts are made to keep even or increase children's services.

5. Program research has raised two related points. First, a number of summative studies do provide evidence that television programming can can be used to achieve educational objectives. Second, formative research is accepted as a powerful tool to improve program quality.

6. Various constituent groups can become extremely influential advocates for children's broadcast programming. How can advocacy groups be best organized to multiply impact? Astute identification and encouragement of organization-specific interests and strengths will maximize cooperation and minimize unproductive alliances.

Alternatives and Options for CPB Action

Based upon the report findings and conclusions, a number of possibilities for CPB action can be described. All alternatives and options should be considered as suggestions for areas in which CPB decision making and policy activities could be directed.

1. A clearinghouse function in which CPB systematically collects, edits, and distributes information concerning new series, money sources, and production activities. A periodic newsletter might serve this purpose.

2. A dissemination function in which CPB regularly issues summaries and reports of ongoing research in other fields that bear on children's television programming. Many program people need access to this diverse body of information generated by researchers in other fields in order to make informed decisions and plans. Areas such as communication, education, psychology, and media could be regularly reviewed and reported on to the children's television community. Demographic and audience reports are also of prime interest. A quarterly research review or bi-monthly information abstracts could serve this purpose.

3. Ongoing policy research on children's programming is still another area to be considered for expanded CPB activities. Regular surveys, follow-up studies, and analysis of utilization could be important field service activities for CPB.

4. CPB is in a pivotal position to organize field efforts at needs assessment; providing design expertise, response leverage, and stability to regular data collection efforts.

5. CPB may choose to target funds for formative program research to improve the likelihood of productions' usability and consumer appeal.

6. CPB may choose to sponsor reviews of formative research strategies that will increase field sophistication in incorporating research into program decision making.

7. CPB may provide a research and design service available as a resource for all CPB funded series.

8. Public relations, not lobbying, for children's programming efforts lies within CPB's arena of possible activities. Persons outside the television community need to be sensitized and involved in programming initiatives. Since public stations depend heavily on audience contributions, CPB efforts to energize that audience and promote visibility and support for children's programming are vital. CPB can orchestrate policy involvement of parents, teachers, public service oriented businesses, and children's advocates.

9. CPB may choose to become the national focal point for instructional television, capitalizing on its centralized position and accrued influence to foster visibility and momentum for the ITV field.

10. CPB may choose to become the national focal point for general children's television programming initiating momentum and encouraging activity in all sectors of the broadcast community.

11. Anticipated changes in child audience demographics raise the possibility of changes in PBS program feeds for children. PBS feed of in-school programming may be one positive response to continuing service to children through public television. CPB could explore the advantages and disadvantages of supporting such a PBS effort.

12 CPB may decide to emphasize instructional programming for children by providing funding and coordination in a number of specific proposals for series' development; but stopping short of instructional programming leadership.

13. CPB may decide to emphasize general children's television programming through funding of specific proposals for series' development; but stopping short of general children's programming leadership.

14. CPB may decide to fund a mix of proposals for specific series for both instructional and general children's audiences.

15. An analysis of current instructional series and needs using the McKelvey model would provide an invaluable data base for planning future series distribution.

16. CPB could target a specific age group and fund a range of series of all types for that groups, creating an age-specific children's series block.

17. CPB may choose to mount a series revision - revival effort to maintain existing stock and usable series.

18. CPB may choose to spread series' initiative and support by rotating funds on a yearly basis through a priority listing of subject needs for instructional or general audiences or both.

19. CPB may choose to concentrate funds on a very few new series (instructional, general or both), or seed many series with small, spot grants.

20. CPB may choose to support efforts to search out, obtain, and adapt international programming as a means of expanding program stock.

21. CPB may adopt general policy directives regarding relative mixes of initiating, continuing, and revision funding for programs each year. A choice needs to be made about where to place dollar support for programs.

22. CPB may choose to examine funding patterns different from the traditional start-to-finish proposal awards. Block grants, open stipends, enhancement, production, or flexible funding matches are some possibilities.

23. CPB may choose to sponsor working, issue-oriented conferences on funding plans and priorities for children's programming.

24. CPB may decide to generate specific policy statements describing public television's commitment to service children as a specialized audience. CPB may choose to become children's advocate within the public broadcast community.